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The Hinterlands of Rome: Settlement Diversity in the Early Imperial Landscape of *Regio VII Etruria*

Robert Witcher

Abstract

Regional survey is revealing ever more diversity of rural settlement across Italy. This paper compares the early imperial period results from thirty surveys across the area of *regio VII Etruria* in order to identify similarities and differences. Three distinct sub-regional patterns are defined – the *suburbium*, coastal Etruria and inland Etruria. A range of interpretative models is discussed with particular reference to the role of the city of Rome on economic and social developments. Finally, some of the structural connections between these three regions are emphasized – particularly demography, transport and agricultural strategies.

Introduction

In an influential article, John Patterson (1987) set out to question the agrarian ‘crisis’ of early imperial Italy. As well as reviewing the historical and documentary sources, he compared the results of regional archaeological surveys – this identified great diversity of rural settlement and dispensed with any notion of a uniform Italian trend. As a contribution to the development of a series of regional models, he presented an interpretative framework for Samnium. The present article aims to identify other such regional models and to account for their distinctiveness and development. The study area extends broadly from the Tiber to the Arno – the Augustan *regio VII Etruria*. Three sub-regions are distinguished – the *suburbium*, coastal Etruria and inland Etruria. Models are discussed for each of these areas and connections sought between them. The overarching historical framework around which interpretation is structured is the relationship between early imperial Rome and its hinterland.

Characterizing diversity

Comparisons of Italian regional archaeological studies can be traced back more than two decades (e.g. Greene 1986; Potter 1980; Wightman 1981), with important recent work by Cifani (2002), Morley (1996), Rendeli (1993) and Terrenato (2001). But overall there has been surprisingly limited progress in generating models and comparing regions. Most research has concentrated on the Republican period (e.g. Burgers 1998; Ikeguchi 2000; Witcher 1999). In contrast, this paper focuses on the early imperial period. The aim is to assess the impact of Rome across Etruria. Frequently, this is gauged from an economic/productive perspective – the dense distribution of villas and farms indicating intensive market production (Lo Cascio 2000; Morley 1996; Quilici Gigli 1994). This paper assesses the predominance of such models and the area to which they can be applied and explores alternatives for more distant areas.

Table 1 details information for 30 surveys, and specifically developments relating to the late republican / early imperial transition. The survey locations are shown in Figure 1. Four measures of early imperial settlement variation are used:

1. Settlement trend. Are site numbers up, down, stable or variable? Is there a peak in numbers? Is this peak restricted to a single period or maintained across two or more?

2. Settlement dynamics. How do site numbers break down into continuing, new and abandoned? Do stable numbers disguise a cycle of abandonment and foundation or relocation?
3. Settlement density. What is the overall site density? Does it vary substantially across the survey area?
4. Settlement hierarchy. What is the shape of the hierarchy (farms, villas, villages)? How did it change?

These measures are used to assess demographic and agricultural trends. Several surveys are only partially published and many omit even basic methodological details and summaries of results. As such, Table 1 is not as comprehensive as it could and should be. However, sufficient data is available to characterize general trends and to facilitate preliminary comparison.

Region	Survey	Site numbers	Settlement hierarchy	Agricultural intensification	Population	Principal publications
Suburbium	South Etruria	Up sharply; c.30% sites are new; peak; <i>ager Veientanus</i> 2.5 sites per km sq; limited 2 nd -c decline	Villas (average) c.30%	Up	Up	Potter 1979
	Fidenae	Up sharply; peak; c.4.5 sites per km sq; limited 2 nd -c decline	Villas c.20%	Up	Up	Quilici & Quilici Gigli 1986
	Crustumerium	Up sharply; peak; c.3 sites per km sq; limited 2 nd -c decline	Significant % villas	Up	Up	Quilici & Quilici Gigli 1980
	Corese	Up slightly; peak c.5 sites per km sq; limited 2 nd -c decline	Villas c.30%	Stable	Stable	Di Giuseppe <i>et al.</i> 2002
	Farfa	Up; peak	Villas 33% +	Up	Up	Leggio & Moreland 1986; Moreland 1987
	Torrimpietra	Up slightly; peak	Villas upto c.20%	Up	Up?	Tartara 1999
	Cerveteri	Up sharply; peak; c.2 sites per km sq	Villas c.30%	Up	Up	Enei 2001
	Sutri	Up sharply (high abandonment; many new sites); peak; modest 2 nd -c decline	Villas c.20%	Up	Up	Morselli 1980, Potter 1979
	Vicus Matrini	Up; peak; modest 2 nd -c decline	Farms under-represented?; c.1 villa per 5km ²	Up	Up	Andreussi 1977
	Civitella Cesi	Up sharply; peak	Villas c.15%	Up	Up	Hemphill 2000
	Tolfa Hills	Up slightly; peak	Villas present	Up	Stable	Maffei & Nastasi 1990
	Tarquiniia-Vulci	Up sharply; peak; modest 2 nd -c decline	Villas c.50%	Up	Up	Corsi 1998
Coastal	Albegna valley (coast) / <i>ager Cosanus</i>	Down (c.50% of farms abandoned)	Villas upto 60%	Up	Stable ?	Carandini <i>et al.</i> 2002
	Roselle	Stable; sharp 2 nd -c decline	Villas c.10%	Stable	Stable	Citter 1996
	Scarlino / Lower Pecora	Up sharply; peak	Villas c.20%	Up	Up	Francovich 1985; van Dommelen 1992
	Cecina valley (coast)	Down	Villas c.30%	Stable ?	Stable ?	Terrenato 1998b
	Pisa	Up	Principal period of villa development	Up	Up?	Pasquinucci & Menchelli 1995; 1999

	Luni	Up	(Modest) villas upto c.30%; overall density low	Up	Stable	Delano Smith <i>et al.</i> 1986; Mills 1981
Inland	Blera	Stable	Modest villas	Up	Stable	Quilici Gigli 1976
	Cicolano	Up?	No	Up?	?	Barker & Grant 1991
	Rieti	Down slightly; c.2 sites per km sq	Villas c.10%	Stable	Stable	Coccia & Mattingly 1992; 1995
	Tuscania	Stable	Larger sites, few/modest villas	Up	Stable	Quilici Gigli 1970 Rasmussen 1991
	Vulci – Bolsena	Up sharply, peak end of 1st-c AD	Significant % villas	Up	Up	Fontana <i>et al.</i> 2002
	Albegna valley (upper valley)	Stable	Villas c.15%	Stable	Stable	Carandini <i>et al.</i> 2002
	Chianti senese	Down	Villas c.7.5%	Down?	Down	Valenti 1995
	Monte Amiata	Down slightly, with increasing nucleation into villages	No villas; predominantly villages	Stable?	Stable	Cambi 1996
	Val d'Elsa	Down slightly, with significant relocation	Villas c.5%	Down	Down	Valenti 1999
	Chiusdino (& Montarrenti)	Down in first century BC; no early imperial recovery	Extremely limited	Down	Down	Barker <i>et al.</i> 1986; Nardini 2001
	Murlo	Overall figures stable, but extensive relocation	Villas present but rare	Stable	Stable	Campana 2001
	Cecina valley (upper valley)	Stable	No villas; villages continue	Stable	Stable	Terrenato 1998b

Table 1 Surveys discussed in text

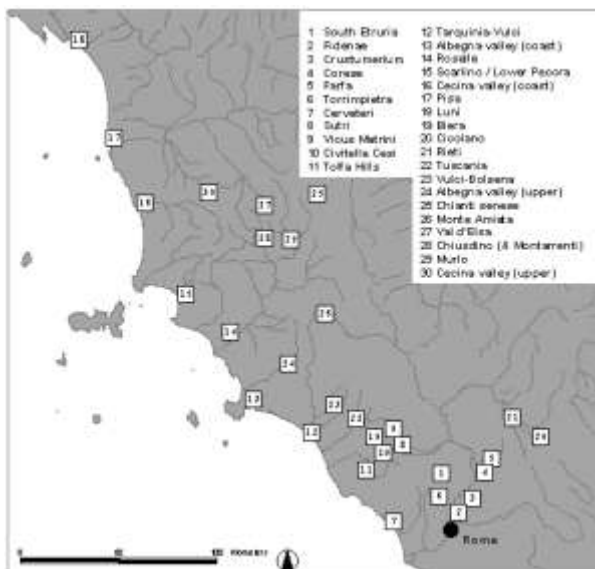


Figure 1: Location of surveys discussed.

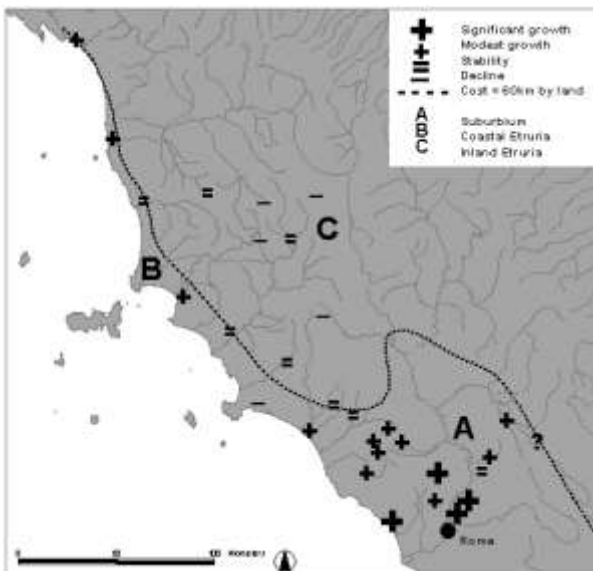


Figure 2: Settlement trends and cost distance.

'Suburbium' has a range of ancient and modern usages (see Volpe 2000); used here it refers to the area in which the distinctive pattern of settlement described below pertains. This extends about 60km from Rome (Fig. 2: A). Some local diversity can be observed, but a series of dominant trends are apparent.

During the late republican period, the area is characterized by strong growth in settlement numbers; villas occur in significant numbers. The transition to the early imperial period demonstrates strong continuity and the majority of pre-existing sites remain in occupation; abandoned sites are outnumbered by new foundations. Overall, the transformation was rapid and comprehensive. In most areas, this growth peaked during the first century AD; in others, it was delayed until the second century, but in all cases the first two centuries AD represent a period of extremely high and sustained numbers. The majority of sites are best characterized as farms, though villas constitute a third or more of the hierarchy across large areas. The distinction between farm and villa is not always clear, and their distributions fully overlap. Overall site density is very high, frequently averaging three sites per square kilometre. Sites consist of dense scatters of pottery and building material. The former includes imported and local *terra sigillata* and thin walled wares. Coarsewares are abundant and local typologies are relatively well developed. Building materials include stone, tile, *opus signinum*, *opus caementicium* and *opus reticulatum* bricks. Plaster is common and often painted; marble veneers and mosaics/tesserae are also widely diffused. The fate of towns was varied. Some benefited from Augustan sponsorship though remained pale imitations of their former selves. Others declined or disappeared and still others demonstrate prosperity. Nonetheless, the area remains one of the most densely urbanized in Italy. New elements in the landscape included colonies, *fora* and road stations. Villages are unattested.

The second area, the Etruscan coast, is here defined as the area extending from Civitavecchia to La Spezia and upto c.20km in land (Fig. 2: B). Compared with the *suburbium*, there is more diversity, but again trends are apparent. In most areas, late republican settlement was expanding and villas emerging in significant numbers. The early imperial transition ranges from a decline of settlement numbers, through stability, to the doubling of site numbers, but the overall trend is for modest growth. The majority of late republican sites continue in occupation, with new sites creating peaks in site numbers. Settlement density is rarely more than three sites per square kilometre and often one or less. The peak of settlement was not maintained beyond the first century AD when

significant numbers, especially farms, were abandoned. The composition of the settlement hierarchy is based on different ratios of farms, villas and villages. Villas comprise up to a third of sites in some areas, though display considerable variation as a group. Villages overlap in size with large villas, but are distinguished by their lack of structural evidence or indicators of 'luxury'. The majority of sites are farms identified through scatters of pottery and building material, predominantly stone and tile. Ceramic evidence comprises a wide range of imported finewares including *terra sigillata*, local and imported amphorae and local coarsewares. Urban centres demonstrate some diversity. Old Etruscan towns declined in relative importance, as did some Roman colonies. In contrast, other colonies flourished. As well as villages, road stations emerged along the Via Aurelia.

Finally, inland Etruria (Fig. 2: C) this is the least comprehensively surveyed of the three areas; the lack of systematic survey for eastern Tuscany and western Umbria biases discussion to west of the Valdichiana. The area demonstrates some diversity in particular between the coastal and inland hills. But again there are common trends. Usually, the peak of site numbers was reached during the second century BC. In some cases, numbers were maintained into the early imperial period, but in others they declined, sometimes dramatically. There were few new sites. The thinning of settlement often involved the emergence of new distributions, shifting into valley bottoms, along rivers and roads. The settlement hierarchy comprised varying ratios of farms, villas and villages. The early imperial decline in numbers primarily concerned small farms; those that continued were characterized by low levels of (diagnostic) material culture including regionally produced *terra sigillata*. Villas were generally modest and formed a small percentage of the hierarchy with a few more affluent examples. Villas were most frequent in proximity to towns. Urban centres (both Etruscan and Roman) were themselves rare, thinning significantly to the north and west. Villages were widespread, broadly becoming more significant in the less urbanized areas. There were comparatively few (consular) roads and road stations were corresponding rare.

A preliminary comparison

On the basis of these brief characterizations, some contrasts can be drawn out. The most marked concern differences of settlement trend, density and hierarchy. In the *suburbium* and along most of the coast, settlement numbers do not peak until the early imperial period with a considerable rise on republican figures; in strong contrast, inland areas demonstrate at best stability and in some areas significant decline. The peak of settlement figures is only maintained beyond the early imperial period in the *suburbium*, with substantial declines along the coast from the mid/late first century AD. There are marked differences in terms of overall settlement density; the shape of settlement hierarchies is also distinct. Villages are absent from the *suburbium*, becoming increasingly significant along the coast and most important in inland Etruria. In contrast, road stations concentrate closer to Rome and the coast. Villas are extremely common in the *suburbium* and along the coast and around towns of the interior, though their form varies enormously both within and between the regions. In the *suburbium*, there is a spectrum along which well-appointed farms develop seamlessly into villas; along the coast and in the interior there is a clearer distinction between farms and villas. Isolated rural farms are found in all areas, but are most frequent by far in the *suburbium*. The early imperial period was therefore a time of dramatic change; the most significant developments were restricted to a distance of c.60km from Rome. This area extended further up the principal river valleys (e.g. Manconi *et al.* 1981). There were similarly dramatic developments along the coast though restricted to a thin and discontinuous strip.

Such diversity is to be expected in a landscape as varied as Italy's and in the context of the massive disruption caused by Rome. However, the identification of diversity should not

paralyse the ability to synthesise – there are wider structural links to be teased out (see Horden & Purcell 2000). The following sections consider the significance of the patterns identified and then seek to articulate the links between them.

Interpreting settlement and agricultural strategies

Perhaps the most debated model of Roman settlement and agricultural development concerns the Marxist slave mode of production (hereafter SMP) and its subsequent ‘crisis’ (Carandini *et al.* 2002; Hopkins 1978). The basics of the argument are well known. During the second century BC, imperial expansion, generated vast wealth which the senatorial class invested in Italian land. Imperialism also opened up markets such as Gaul and provided labour in the form of slaves. Peasants were forced from the land and large estates organized along capitalist lines began large-scale production for export. By the end of the first century BC, provincial competition was eroding the economic supremacy of Italy; this required diversification from vines to more extensive arable and pastoral strategies. The main archaeological correlates of this model are settlement expansion through to the late first century BC, followed by rapid decline from the early imperial period.

The aim here is not to critique the model *per se* (see Purcell 1985), but to examine its geographical scope and how it might connect with those proposed for other areas. The model draws heavily on the evidence from the *ager Cosanus*, where late republican growth was followed by marked imperial period decline. Its relevance along other parts of the coast is varied. To the south there are pronounced early imperial settlement peaks, though rarely are these maintained into the second century. To the north, there was more modest growth, whilst at Luni, settlement flourished for the first time. The close proximity in which such diverse areas lie is noticeable – for example, immediately south of the *ager Cosanus*, the area between the Chiarone and Tafone rivers had very few villas and was focused around villages throughout (Carandini *et al.* 2002). But if the model is localized in its relevance along the coast, it becomes even less pertinent elsewhere. In the *suburbium*, the continuity of high site density into the mid imperial period negates its usefulness, as do the lack of villas and absence of a first century AD peak in inland Etruria.

In the *suburbium*, the dominant models concern wealthy villas, widely argued to represent elite investment in the intensification of agriculture with the aim of profit (Carandini 1989; Morley 1996). But in contrast to the coast, arguments for slave estates do not convince (e.g. the selective use of the *ager Veientanus* data, Celluza and Regoli 1982; or its exclusion altogether, Carandini, 1989). Counter arguments are more persuasive, including the unsuitable landscape, the availability of urban labour and prohibitive land prices (Ikeguchi 2000; Potter 1979; generally, Quilici Gigli 1994; Volpe 2000). But most significant is the high density and even distribution of rural settlement and the wide social distribution of material culture. All of this raises questions about landownership and exploitation.

Alongside villas, Potter (1979; 1980) refers to ‘smallholders’ comprising colonists, veterans and peasants of various origins. Such farms controlled limited areas of marginal land; a combination of luck and hard graft offered the potential for the accumulation and expenditure of wealth. One argument against such a free peasantry is its rapid early imperial growth and successful competition with large landowners at a time of high land prices. It seems unlikely that the peasantry should have competed so effectively in this environment. An alternative emphasizes dependency between villas and farms. The density of sites argues for the continuity of fragmented landholding, but sources point to elite ownership of multiple farms within a single estate (e.g. Cic. *Rosc. Am.* 7.20). The letters of Pliny the Younger focus on *coloni* and suggest an early emphasis on small units

within larger estates (Lo Cascio 2000). The organization of labour has been argued to be tenancy (de Neeve 1984).

Tenancy offered both landowner and tenant economic and social advantages (Foxhall 1990); the landowner could intensify production and build a client base, whilst tenants gained patronage and some economic security. The relative density and prosperity of towns also suggest tenants rather than slaves (Nagle 1979). Tenancy concentrates landownership into a smaller number of hands – these can be grouped as ‘internal’ and ‘external’. The former comprise Etruscan and colonial families deriving their wealth from local land and spending their wealth in local towns. In contrast, the latter comprises ‘outsiders’ (Romans, Italians, provincials) for whom the acquisition of suburban land was necessary, desirable or both. For both groups of villa owners, the interpretative emphasis has been on production, marginalizing ‘non-economic’ considerations – more *utilitas* than *voluptas* (Varro 1.4.1).

Early imperial society demanded a particular mode of elite living. The transformation of existing villas through new materials and the building of new villas illustrate the area’s role in competitive display. Some villas may have developed from republican farms and represent the successful advancement of local smallholders, but the substantial and coherent plans of some new foundations are suggestive of existing capital, rather than accrued wealth. The origins of such wealth are impossible to determine, but the great concentration of senatorial landowners makes it possible that wealth derived from other properties around the empire was lavished on these suburban estates. Whilst all the usual requirements for self-sufficiency and the possibilities of producing for Rome existed, the economic viability of many of these estates may have been underwritten by the productivity of distant lands.

Another issue is the interpretive dominance of production at the expense of consumption. The *suburbium* was distinctive for both the range and scale of its consumption – for example, marble, *opus reticulatum* and ceramics. This is not to argue against substantial production, but rather to emphasize that this existed alongside a substantial and extraordinary mode of consumption. There were also other exceptional pressures on the way in which the landscape was used – burial, rubbish dumping, extraction and manufacturing (Patterson 2000).

There is no dominant interpretive model for inland Etruria. The area is relatively remote from both Rome and the coast and such isolation from the powerhouses of the new imperial economy must form a component of any argument. But as the export ceramic industry at Arezzo demonstrates, such a location is not always insurmountable. Apart from the more limited demand from Rome, a strong contrast with the other areas concerns urbanism. There were few urban centres – either Etruscan or Roman – and this may be critical. Towns were the foci of the political economy; they were places of production, exchange and consumption; more importantly, they were the focus of *urbanitas* and elite competition. In turn, these towns shaped rural economies and agricultural organization. Low urbanization limited internal demand to intensify production. Similarly, low or declining populations curtailed demand and limited participation in the wider Italian economy. Towns and dispersed settlement were therefore marginal; villages were of greater significance. This situation suggests distinct patterns of landholding and social relations. In particular, village-based settlement may indicate less intensive agricultural exploitation, tighter control over social relations and economic resources and/or insecurity.

Despite geographical distance, it would be wrong to assume the area was isolated from the influence of Rome. The second century BC ‘emancipation’ of the serfs has been related to Roman involvement (Valenti 1995) and large parts of the area suffered as a result of the decision to side with Marius against Sulla. Thus the area was not spared the

dramatic developments of the early imperial coast and *suburbium* and it seems unlikely that pre-existing social and economic structures survived more strongly here than in other parts of Etruria.

Linking the regions – demography

Reconstructing population trends on the basis of survey data has been the focus of much recent research (Bintliff & Sbonias 1999). Such work is far from an exact science; variables such as the number of people per farm are at best rough estimates. Nonetheless, the three regional patterns outlined above demonstrate significant demographic contrasts. The early imperial population of the *suburbium* rose significantly; the population of the coast rose modestly; the population of inland Etruria remained stable or fell. These results contrast with the conclusions reached in a recent contribution. Sbonias (1999) proposes two models of demographic trend and agricultural production for the area under discussion. In the first model, he observes that those areas with links to the Rome market experienced a decline in population between the first century BC and second century AD. This he argues represents estate agglomeration leading to depopulation via emigration; urban centres were often depressed. The second model concerns areas which were unaffected by market pressures. Here, local elites vigorously competed in towns, leading to widespread rural poverty. In turn, peasants brought marginal areas into production. The latter model draws directly on Patterson (1987). In one of the earlier attempts to explore Italian demographic trends through survey data, Patterson argued that the Trajanic alimentary schemes were instigated to relieve rural poverty and to boost population, in particular with regard to military recruitment (for a range of alternatives, Duncan-Jones 1982; Lo Cascio 2000; Métraux 1998). Alimentary schemes were spread across peninsular Italy, but concentrated in southern Etruria, Latium and northern Campania. The presence of such schemes at, for example, Ligures Baebiani and Capena was taken to indicate rural impoverishment (Patterson 1987). The conclusions of Patterson and Sbonias therefore contradict the current results.

How can this be explained? First, Patterson's correlation of alimentary schemes with rural poverty. The distribution of these schemes near Rome coincides with the area which survey suggests to have been the most economically dynamic and populous of early imperial Italy. If the *alimenta* were connected to such economic and demographic problems, few schemes would be expected here. This may add weight to arguments linking the *alimenta* with boosting food production for Rome (Lo Cascio 2000). Second, Sbonias' models. The first argues that areas linked to Rome's market experienced estate agglomeration, rural-urban migration and depopulation; this is not the *suburbium* pattern recognized above. On the contrary, survey identifies a peak in site numbers and rising population. Migration to local towns is also ruled out by their small size or even abandonment (see Patterson 1994). In effect, Sbonias has omitted the evidence of the *suburbium* and over-generalized the results of the *ager Cosanus*; although both areas were involved with the Rome market, their participation was quite distinct. Sbonias' second model argues that inland areas isolated from the demands of Rome's market demonstrate demographic and economic crises leading to the expansion of agricultural land. Following Patterson (1987), the *ager Capenas* is offered as an area with minimal involvement in supplying Rome; instead there was an 'internalized' economy focused around local elite competition. Again Sbonias generalizes these results to represent other areas. However, this interpretation of the *ager Capenas* is problematic. The area lies between the *via Flaminia* and the Tiber, between 25 and 45km north of Rome. All the evidence places the area firmly within the *suburbium*. Its overall settlement trends fit comfortably with those outlined above and recent surveys have identified very high settlement density (Camili & Vitali Rosati 1995; Capena 1995). The Villa of the Volusii is the epitome of a wealthy

senatorial family's country retreat/working estate (Bodel 1997; Métraux 1998; Moretti & Sgubini Moretti 1977). Access to Rome was facilitated by both roads and the Tiber, and the *horrea Volusiana* in Rome emphasizes the villa's exportation of produce. Pace Patterson and Sbonias, it is difficult to interpret this area as isolated from the Roman market.

There are also alternative readings of changing settlement patterns. Patterson sees the occupation of new, marginal areas as a result of rural poverty, with peasants pushed from the best land to new areas. In contrast, others argue this indicates market pressure encouraging the use of marginal land for profit (Kahane *et al.* 1968; Morley 1996). The inflated price of land around Rome makes it unlikely that peasants would possess the economic power to acquire it; on the other hand, wealthy landowners would have both the motive and the capital.

Therefore a generalized link between rural poverty and *alimenta* appears unlikely; those areas most closely linked to the Roman market demonstrate high and sustained rural population, densely dispersed across the countryside, whilst areas most distant from these pressures demonstrate stability, if not contraction.

The contrast between the rapidly expanding population of the *suburbium* and the stable or falling population of inland areas is marked. Through their proximity, it is tempting to see them as related. Not least, the early imperial period was a time of unprecedented social mobility; wars, colonization and the *pax romana* led to enormous population movement. The city of Rome reached its peak of c.1 million, a figure which on analogy required massive immigration to achieve and maintain (Morley 1996). Some of this population may have come from the *suburbium*, but the latter's own population was expanding and it may be that it was itself a net recipient of immigrants. In contrast, Italy as a whole was characterized by falling birthrates and a lack of citizens for recruitment (Brunt 1971). This emphasizes the demographic growth in the *suburbium* as particularly remarkable. Tentatively it might be suggested that these divergent demographic trends included an element of inter-regional migration.

Linking the regions – core-periphery

Core-periphery models have long been popular in archaeological interpretation. Such ideas underlie the SMP model (Cunliffe 1988); Roman involvement in Gaul served to open up distant markets, before provincial developments rose to satisfy demand locally. All exporting economies are vulnerable to change in demand and whilst the coastal economies struggled to restructure in the face of provincial competition, the *suburbium* was benefiting from the expanding Rome market. Despite the city's provincial imports, the *suburbium* was geographically and socially well connected.

Core-periphery ideas may also link the three regions under discussion. Classic economic theory suggests Rome's demands should instigate intensification of activity in the immediate *suburbium*. Further afield, demand was perceived and responded to differently. Transport costs make bulky low value goods such as grain uneconomic; other strategies therefore develop on the periphery, in particular pastoralism and woodland exploitation. Animal products are relatively high value, these can be preserved or walked to market and the extensive areas required are facilitated through lower land costs (Morley 1996). As such, far beyond the *suburbium*, Roman demand might instigate a *deintensification* of agricultural activity. Such a shift to more extensive agriculture on the periphery of Rome's hinterland fits well with the evidence from inland Etruria.

There is dispute as to whether pre-modern systems were powerful enough to create the economic pressures characteristic of the contemporary world (Bintliff 1997), nonetheless, if

any area of the empire were to demonstrate such a situation of under-development, it could well be that under discussion.

Linking the regions – cost distances

Traditional economic theories suggest the areas most affected by demand from the Roman market would be the immediate territory, the coastal strip and the principal river valleys. Cost ratios of sea : river : land transport equivalent to 1:5:25-40 have been widely proposed (Morley 1996). The three regions defined here conform to the resulting pattern (Fig. 2), but require additional comment.

Despite the high cost of land transport, roads remained the primary means of moving goods (Laurence 1999). The extensive dendritic network of well-paved roads and road stations around Rome emphasize the particular importance of land transport for the city. High demand, both locally and at Rome led to intensive production which could command high prices (Duncan-Jones 1982); this must have distorted the cost ratios and extended the viability of land transport. The pattern of thickly dispersed villas and farms extending for c.60km from Rome fits with a generous land transport distance for low value goods.

Further afield, the entire west coast of Italy falls within the same cost distance band – that is, had similar cost access to Rome. But Figure 2 shows there still was great diversity within this area. Beyond the *suburbium*, settlement becomes much more locally diverse, sensitive to a range of additional non-‘cost’ issues. These might include environmental constraints or affordances, such as navigable rivers, forests or mountains. Resources such as agricultural land, timber, metals or stone may only have been exploited under certain conditions (e.g. imperial demand for marble). Alternatively, supplies from other parts of the empire might curtail economic activity (e.g. the *lack* of early imperial iron extraction at Tolfa, Zifferero 1995).

Social and political factors are also important. Along the coast, the distribution of the SMP was highly localized; a common characteristic of these areas was earlier colonization and centuriation. This is no coincidence; such reorganization effected the break up of social and economic structures and replacement with new concepts of ownership and exploitation necessary for external landowners to build up extensive estates. Correspondingly, it is possible to see “pockets of hyperactive economic activity” (Terrenato 1998a) located side-by-side with less developed landscapes (cf. the lower Chiarone valley with the *ager Cosanus* or the lower Cecina valley with the *ager Pisanus*). Not all areas of the coast therefore responded to similar economic possibilities in the same way. A few kilometres were enough to insulate inland economies from such ‘commercialization’. But such areas were not conservative. Where towns existed, urban life still reshaped rural settlement. One important mechanism connecting the interior with the coast and with Rome was transhumance (Morley 1996). Such practices are difficult to detect, but there is indirect evidence for the power of the Roman economy to integrate even isolated upland areas. At over 1200m, the *altipiano* of Cicolano is 65km from Rome ‘as the crow flies’ but substantially further in reality. Survey has recovered imperial finewares indicating new/intensified involvement with lowland economies; the basis of this exchange is argued to be pastoralism and possibly charcoal burning (Barker & Grant 1991).

Conclusions

It is impossible to generalize meaningfully at a high level about Italian agriculture. The proliferation of regional survey – and in particular in the areas beyond Etruria, Latium and Campania – increasingly emphasizes the diversity of Italian agriculture. This demands the definition of a range of interpretative models. Just as important, is to seek out the threads which connect them.

The early imperial transformation of the *suburbium* was rapid and profound – a sharp rise of settlement and spread of new goods and symbols. Villas demonstrate variety of form and ownership; they were funded by a mix of local production and externally generated wealth. Alongside were small properties intensively farmed by dependent tenants, some of who may have originated from beyond the area. The production of specialized goods continued into the mid imperial period, with leisure and display assuming even greater significance. Overall, this was a distinctive landscape of patronage, production and consumption.

The coast demonstrates greater diversity. Some areas had undergone precocious development, including slave estates, back in the second century BC exploiting the opportunities of empire. In time, the *pax romana* left such areas disadvantaged. But although of great importance, these economies were geographically restricted. The divergent histories and environments of this coast guaranteed a range of other developmental trajectories, despite the similar cost access to Rome.

Finally, inland Etruria demonstrates great variety, but the predominant organization of labour was the peasantry. In most areas, this population was stable, though in some it declined. In the absence of a dense network of urban centres, peasants were increasingly concentrated into villages, possibly indicating attempts to tighten control of the means of production. Consumption of locally produced and imported diagnostic wares was limited. The trajectory of this region may be distinct, but it was still closely integrated into the social and economic framework of Roman Italy.

At a macro-regional scale, these three models conform to an economic rationale (Fig. 2). But within this framework there are highly localized patterns dependent on environment, pre-Roman characteristics and forms of conquest and control. As such it is difficult to define regionally distinct models; within each region a range were in operation – slaves and peasants, leisure villas and productive tenant farms. It might even be appropriate to replace a regional with a thematic approach and direct effort towards assessing the balance between the different models effective in each area.

The pressures created by Rome are heavily implicated in the shaping of Italian settlement. But contrary to some models of *tota Italia*, these pressures did not lead to uniformity. The diverse landscapes of Italy were not shaped simply by Roman decisions, economic principles or geographical location. Each was the product of dialogue and specific circumstances; for example, the *suburbium* benefited from its proximity to Rome, but equally important were the social relations of local and Roman elites and the flexible nature of tenancy. In this sense, Roman colonialism created *greater* diversity. The analysis of the regional settlement patterns of Italy is one approach to the study of the many economies and cultural identities of Roman Italy. This paper has concentrated on a restricted geographical area and chronological arc. Future research should expand to identify other regional patterns and explore both the earlier impact of Roman imperialism and the transformation to late antiquity.

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